



American Citizen Services News

Maintaining permanent residence status

Many American citizens in Syria have relatives who have immigrated or plan to immigrate to U.S. The Embassy frequently sees cases where, due to misunderstandings of the rules, these permanent residents of the U.S. ("green card" holders) lose their permanent residence status. If someone in your family is a permanent resident of the U.S., or plans to become one, please take a look at the following guidelines on maintaining permanent resident status.

The basic criterion for maintaining permanent resident status is that the U.S. must be the permanent resident's primary place of residence. It is expected that most of one's time will be spent in one's primary place of residence. That being said, one is free to travel outside the U.S. whenever one wishes.



However, lengthy absences from the U.S., particularly if they involve work or taking up residence abroad, may indicate that one has abandoned one's residence in the U.S. Generally, residing outside the U.S., without advance authorization from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), will cause one to lose one's permanent resident status.

"Green card" holders can seek authorization from the USCIS to reside outside the U.S. for up to two years by filing for a "reentry permit," using [Form I-131, Application for Travel Document](#), before departing the U.S.. Additional information on reentry permits is available in the following online document: "[I Am a Permanent Resident...How Do I Get a Reentry Permit?](#)"

Under limited circumstances, green card holders may be able to protect eligibility for naturalization by filing [Form N-470, Application to Preserve Residence for Naturalization Purposes](#), before they depart.

U.S. Government personnel (military and

direct-hire civil service employees), their spouses and minor children who hold lawful permanent resident status in the United States may remain outside of the United States for the duration of an official overseas assignment plus four months without losing their permanent resident status.

A permanent resident who has remained outside the U.S. for longer than one year, or beyond the validity period of a Re-entry Permit, will require a new immigrant visa to enter the U.S. and resume permanent residence. A provision exists under U.S. visa law for the issuance of a returning resident special immigrant visa to a permanent resident who remained outside the U.S. due to circumstances beyond his/her control. If you are a permanent resident who was unable to return to the U.S. within the travel validity period of the green card (1 year) or the validity of the Re-entry Permit (2 years), you may be eligible and can apply at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for a Returning Resident (SB-1) immigrant visa. Additional information can be found [online](#).

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Q&A: What if I lose my passport?

Q. WHAT SHOULD U.S. CITIZENS DO IF THEIR PASSPORT IS LOST OR STOLEN ABROAD?

A. Contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. Phone numbers for U.S. embassies and consulates are also available in our [Country Specific Information](#) and [Key Officers handbook](#). You will need to speak to the American Citizens Services unit of the Consular Section. If you are notified by a relative or friend that their U.S. passport has been lost/stolen, you may wish to contact Overseas Citizens Services, (202) 647-5225 at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C.

Q. WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO OBTAIN A REPLACEMENT PASSPORT?

A. You will need to complete a new passport application. The consular officer taking an application must be reasonably satisfied as to your identity and citizenship before issuing the replacement.

Q. WHAT INFORMATION WILL I NEED TO PROVIDE THE CONSULAR OFFICER?

A. You will be asked for certain information to assist in verifying your citizenship:

1. Personal Data: (including, but not limited to)

- your name
- date of birth
- place of birth
- passport number (if available)
- date and place where your passport was issued

2. Affidavit Regarding Loss/Theft of the Passport/Police Report:

When you report the loss, theft, or misplacement of your passport you must execute an affidavit fully describing the circumstances. U.S. Department of State form DS-64 may be used for this purpose, or you may simply execute a sworn statement before the consular officer describing what happened.

3. Citizenship Verification and Name Clearance:

The U.S. embassy/consulate will confirm your previous passport issuance through our Passport Verification System or by requesting that Overseas Citizens Services, (202) 647-5225, in the U.S. Department of State retrieve the actual passport application.

4. Proof of Identity:

You will also be asked for some proof of your identity. If all your personal papers were lost or stolen with your passport, your identity can be established in a number of ways.

In most cases the problem of identity is resolved quickly. It should be noted, however, that if there is any indication of possible fraud, the consular officer may request additional documentation or other information, which may include the following:

- Information From Consular Interview
- Identifying Witness
- Information From Family, Friends or Associates in the United States
- Information From Previous Passport Records

Q. WILL THE REPLACEMENT PASSPORT BE ISSUED FOR THE FULL 10-YEAR VALIDITY PERIOD FOR AN ADULT?

A. Replacements for lost passports are normally issued for the full 10-year period of validity for adults.

Q. ARE FEES CHARGED FOR REPLACEMENT OF LOST/STOLEN PASSPORTS ABROAD?

A. The normal passport fees are collected from applicants for replacement passports, although exceptions can be made in some cases where a traveler is left without money.

Q. CAN THE U.S. EMBASSY ISSUE A REPLACEMENT PASSPORT OVER A WEEKEND OR HOLIDAY?

A. U.S. passports are not routinely issued by U.S. embassies and consulates abroad on weekends and holidays.



New birth record forms

The Department of State is pleased to announce the introduction of a redesigned Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA, or Form FS-240). The redesigned CRBA, which is an official record confirming that a child born abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents acquired U.S. citizenship at birth and serves as proof of citizenship, has been updated with a variety of state-of-the-art security features to help prevent fraud and identity theft.

Beginning in early 2011, overseas posts will still document the citizenship of children born overseas to U.S.-citizen parents, but



the CRBAs will be printed at our passport agencies in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and New Orleans, Louisiana, using the information provided by overseas posts.

By centralizing production and eliminating the distribution of controlled blank stock throughout the world, we will help ensure uniform quality and lessen the possibility of fraud. Additionally, the Department will no longer issue the DS-1350 Certification of Report of Birth Abroad. Instead, the Department will simply provide new FS-240s in response to requests for additional, replacement, or amended CRBAs.

Embassy services to be provided for one day in Qalaat al Husn!

As part of our ongoing efforts to ensure that American citizens throughout Syria are able to access the services provided by the Embassy, consular officers will be visiting the village of Qalaat al Husn on February 24, 2011 to offer passport, birth registration, notarial and other citizen services.

We will be operating out of the Francis Hotel Al Wadi, in Amar Village, which is 4 km past Qalaat al Husn on the Homs-Tartous highway, about 55 km from Homs.

If you plan to attend, please make an appointment by emailing us at acsdamascus@state.gov or by calling the Embassy at 3391-4444 and ask for the American Citizen Services unit.

Visit the Consular Section on Facebook!



Our Facebook page is growing fast, with new “likes” and “friends” every day. We appreciate the warm reception we’ve received so far and would encourage American citizens and their friends interested in travel to the United States to visit the page often.

While we will continue to use the Embassy’s web site and warden messages as the primary medium to provide new information, the Facebook page is a great way to interact and ask any specific questions you may have.

The Facebook page can be accessed at:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Damascus-Syria/Consular-Section-US-Embassy-Damascus/108958265838252>.

By clicking the “like” button at the top of the page, you will automatically receive news updates and have the ability to post comments or questions.



Educational Advising

Do you know someone who is interested in studying in the USA? The Educational Advisor is available for one-on-one advising appointments during the following times at the Educational Advising Office in the cultural section of the U.S. Embassy:

Mondays- Thursdays from 12:00 pm-3:00pm

The Educational Advisor can discuss topics such as:

- The admissions process
- How to select a university
- Standardized testing information
- How to prepare a successful application
- Financial Aid

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Email: educationusa.syria@gmail.com

Phone: (963-11) 3391-4171

*****Please contact the advisor to schedule an appointment*****

American Language Center Test Dates

Test	January 2011	February 2011	March 2011	April 2011	May 2011	June 2011
ITP	Thursday, January 13 Thursday, January 27	Thursday, February 10 Wednesday, February 23	Wednesday, March 9 Thursday, March 24	Wednesday, April 6 Monday, April 18 Thursday, April 28	Wednesday, May 4 Monday, May 23	Wednesday, June 8 Thursday, June 30
GRE	N/A	General Test Saturday, February 12	N/A	Subject Test Saturday, April 9	N/A	N/A
SAT	Saturday, January 22	N/A	N/A	N/A	Saturday, May 7	Saturday, June 4
TOEFL	Saturday, January 15	N/A	Friday, March 4	N/A	Saturday, May 7	N/A
TSE	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered
TOEIC	Wednesday, January 26	Tuesday, February 22	Wednesday, March 23	Wednesday, April 27	Tuesday, May 24	Wednesday, June 29

Flu season in Syria: taking steps to protect yourself

The Embassy has reviewed reporting of three deaths in Syria from the H1N1 influenza virus. A cursory review of recent reporting reveals that Jordan has reported similar numbers of cases as have some other neighboring countries in the region. The Centers for Disease Control does not consider this extraordinary outbreak, as similar number of deaths may be expected in a normal flu season. H1N1 may be only one of many culprit viruses that will be implicated in morbidity and mortality analyses across the world.

Although there may not be an outbreak of H1N1 influenza, the recent deaths do serve to highlight the fact that the flu — any flu — can represent a serious risk. The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months old and older get a flu vaccine every flu season. Flu vaccines have protected millions of people for decades. In addition to getting the vaccine, following are some everyday protective measures you should take:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.*
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.



American Citizen Services Hours and Contact Information

For appointments, please go to our website at :
<http://damascus.usembassy.gov/service.html>

UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSURES

February 16, Tuesday	Mawlid An-Nabi
February 20, Sunday	Presidents' Day

**U.S. Embassy Damascus
American Citizen Services
Consular Section
2, Al-Mansour Street, Abu Roumaneh
PO Box 29
Damascus, Syria
Phone: (+963-11) 3391-4444
Fax: (+963-11) 3391-3999)**

“Assisting approximately 4 million Americans who reside overseas and nearly 60 million who travel abroad remains a top priority for the U.S. Government.

Though consular work is punctuated by extraordinary acts to help U.S. citizens during times of crisis or urgent need, it is built upon a foundation of services provided to an American public that increasingly lives, works, and learns in the global community.”

-- Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan.